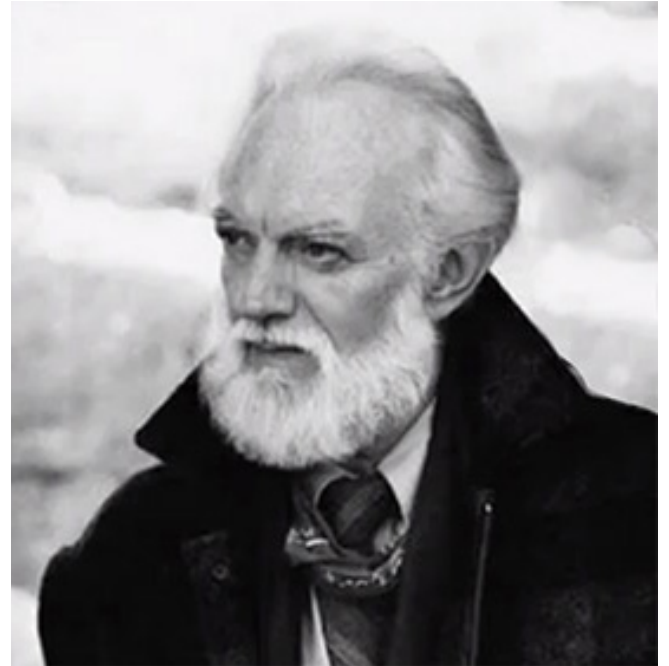


DIANE DE POLIGNAC

**PAUL JENKINS**  
**(1923-2012)**



Paul Jenkins was an American abstract painter who lived between New York and Paris. After studying at the Art Students League, he became part of the Abstract Expressionist movement with Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock. Paul Jenkins also worked with many French artists, as well as Japanese artists in the Gutai group.

## BIOGRAPHY

### THE PAINTER PAUL JENKINS' EARLY LIFE AND ARTISTIC TRAINING

Paul Jenkins was born on 12 July 1923 in Kansas City, Missouri, in the United States. Paul Jenkins studied at the Kansas City Art Institute between 1937 and 1942—it was during this period that he worked with the ceramist James Weldon, who would have a great influence on Jenkins' 1950s paintings. Paul Jenkins developed a passion for theatre, receiving a scholarship to attend the Cleveland Play House theatre school in Ohio, where he designed sets.

Paul Jenkins was then called up and served in the U.S. Naval Air Corps between 1943 and 1945. In 1948, he moved to New York City where he studied at the Art Students League of New York, an art school founded in 1875. It was there that he met the painters Morris Kantor and Mark Rothko. He studied under Yasuo Kuniyoshi, who encouraged him to “delve deeply into colour”. In New York, Paul Jenkins was a regular visitor to the Frick Museum, where he admired the works of Francisco de Goya, Rembrandt, William Turner, Georges de la Tour and Johannes Vermeer, from which he learned about the importance of light.

### THE PAINTER PAUL JENKINS' FIRST TRAVELS TO EUROPE

After graduating in 1953, Paul Jenkins travelled to Italy and Spain using the benefits he received as a result of the G.I. Bill—a scholarship distributed by the U.S. government to encourage cultural exchange between the United States and Europe. Paul Jenkins then moved to Paris, where he met Jean Dubuffet, Georges Mathieu and Pierre Soulages, as well as various American artists living in Paris, including the painters Sam Francis and Lee Krasner, and the sculptor Claire Falkenstein. Paul Jenkins would divide his time between New York and Paris throughout his life. The writer Frank Anderson Trapp observed: “It is extremely interesting to note that Jenkins left the United States for Europe just as New York was being recognised as the leading centre of innovation in the visual arts.”

Working with powdered pigments that gave his oil paintings a glazed effect, Paul Jenkins developed a fascination for the works of Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon.

In 1954, Paul Jenkins' first solo exhibition work was held at the Studio Paul Facchetti in Paris, where Paul Jenkins met the gallery owner Martha Jackson and the artist Mark Tobey. In the same year, Jenkins' works were shown at the Galerie Arnaud in Paris.

### THE PAINTER PAUL JENKINS' SUCCESS IN THE UNITED STATES

Paul Jenkins' first solo exhibition in the United States was held at the Zoe Dusanne Gallery in Seattle in 1955. The Seattle Art Museum bought one of his paintings at the event. In the same year, Paul Jenkins exhibited his works in group exhibitions at the Martha Jackson Gallery in New York, as well as at the Galerie Rive Droite, the Galerie Jean Lacarde and the Petit Palais in Paris. The next year was marked by the acquisition of one of Paul Jenkins' works by the collector John I. H. Baur for the Whitney Museum of American Art and Jenkins' participation in a group exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1957, Peggy Guggenheim bought an oil on canvas by Paul Jenkins from the Stadler Gallery in Paris and donated it to the New Orleans Museum of Art.

Living in New York in 1958, the painter began work on his *Eyes of the Dove* series and participated in a group exhibition at the Carnegie Institute's Museum of Art in Pittsburgh.

### PAUL JENKINS' PHENOMENA PERIOD

After studying Goethe's theories on colour, Paul Jenkins began work on his *Phenomena* series in 1960: diluting oil paint to achieve watercolour-style effects, he spread the paint over the surface of the canvas with an ivory knife. Discussing these works, Paul Jenkins said: “Have you ever seen a shark's fin cutting through the surface of the water? It is very pretty. Beauty harbours latent violence...” Paul Jenkins began using acrylic paint as soon as it became available in the United States in the early 1960s. Describing Paul Jenkins' approach to work—constantly inventing new techniques—the poet Alain Bosquet said: “The most original [technique] involved pouring the colours into the hollow of a sheet or canvas that he had curved. The sheet was then tilted (...) and lightly folded or unfolded, to force the colours to gather (...) and thus to find their shape. The choreography [of the work] is thus intensified by the movement of the painter.”

In 1961, the Karl Flinker Gallery presented a solo exhibition of Paul Jenkins' works. In the same year, the publisher Editions Two Cities in Paris published the book *The Paintings of Paul Jenkins*, which contained texts by Kenneth B. Sawyer, James Fitzsimmons and Pierre Restany. Discussing the painter, the latter said: “Jenkins' chromatic register disregards all visual constraints: his palette ventures far beyond the conventional limits at the upper end of the spectrum.”

Paul Jenkins met Henri Michaux in 1962—the same year that his works were presented in group exhibitions at the Louvre Museum, the Musée d'Art moderne de Paris and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, as well as at the

Whitney Museum in New York and the Rose Art Museum in Waltham, Massachusetts, in the United States. The following year works by Paul Jenkins were shown in group exhibitions at the Art Institute in Chicago and the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

In 1964, a Paul Jenkins retrospective was held at the Kestner-Gesellschaft in Hanover. The Martha Jackson Gallery produced the film *The Ivory Knife: Paul Jenkins at Work*, which was shown in 1966 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and at the Venice Festival, where it received the Golden Eagle Award.

Paul Jenkins travelled to Japan—where he worked with the Gutai group and exhibited works at the Tokyo Gallery—as well as India and Russia.

In 1967, Paul Jenkins received an award for painting at the 30<sup>th</sup> Biennale of the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington. His play *Strike the Puma*, which was published the previous year, appeared on stage in New York. Paul Jenkins' wife Suzanne Donnelly-Jenkins—who co-wrote with Paul Jenkins—explained that the play hoped “to retrace, in the form of a dance drama, the passage of colour through a prism”.

In 1968, Paul Jenkins produced a series of unique glass sculptures in Venice with the glassmaker Egidio Costantini—whom he knew through Mark Tobey.

Two retrospective exhibitions of Paul Jenkins' work were presented in 1971: at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts and the San Francisco Museum of Art. Around the same time, a monumental sculpture by Paul Jenkins entered the collections of the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York.

The monograph Paul Jenkins was published in 1973 by Harry N. Abrams in New York. The artist made his first designs for the *Mandala Meditation Sundial*, a bronze sculpture project that was completed four years later by the Tallix Foundry in New York.

### **PAUL JENKINS' PRISMES PERIOD**

Paul Jenkins began studying Newton's prism in 1976, exploring the effects of transparency and opacity. In the following year, Paul Mazursky shot *An Unmarried Woman* in Jenkins' studio in New York. The artist was working on a series of autobiographical collages at the time. The *Anatomy of a Cloud* series, which featured collages, paintings and sculptures, was exhibited at the Gimpel Weitzenhoffer Gallery in New York in 1978.

During an extended trip to the Caribbean in 1979, Paul Jenkins experimented with more thickly painted works. The painter began employing an impasto technique, laying colours on the canvas in thick layers and then etching into the paint to reveal the colours layered underneath. Known for regularly reinventing his techniques, Paul Jenkins noted that: “It's not the technique that matters. Technique is only the grammar of intention, thoughts and ideas (...) But first there is sensation, both perceptive and receptive. And with sensation comes the experience of discovering and knowing what one does not have time to explain in the moment.”

A retrospective of Paul Jenkins' work was held at the Palm Springs Desert Museum in 1981. A piece by Paul Jenkins was acquired by the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, a public collection under the management of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication. In 1983, the artist was made a Commander of the French Order of Arts and Letters for services to French art. His autobiography, entitled *Anatomy of a Cloud*, was published by Harry N. Abrams in New York and Paul Jenkins received a medal from the Art Directors Club.

In 1986, Paul Jenkins wrote a choreographic piece, *Shaman to the Prism Seen*, which was performed the following year at the Paris Opera. Paul Jenkins created canvases, sets and costumes for the production.

A retrospective exhibition was presented at the Musée Picasso in Antibes in the same year. Paul Jenkins created set decorations in silk for a production at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. He also painted six 18 x 5 m banners, a 20 x 25 m canvas, and a series of 10 x 1 m banners for the Great Wall of China in 1988.

The Palais des Beaux-Arts in Lille held a retrospective exhibition of Paul Jenkins' work in 2005. Jenkins' works also featured in the exhibition *Under Each Other's Spell: Gutai and New York* at the Pollock-Krasner House & Study Center in Springs, New York, in 2009. Solo exhibitions were presented at the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento in 2010 and at the Museo di Pittura Murale in Prato (Italy) in 2014.

Paul Jenkins passed away in New York in 2012. His archives, including many photographs taken by his wife, were transferred to the American Art Archives at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., in 2010—the archives contained more than 6,000 pieces.

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## SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Albany, NY, Empire State Plaza  
Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum  
Antibes, Musée Picasso  
Arles, Fondation Van Gogh  
Austin, TX, University of Texas, collection James A. Michener  
Baltimore, MD, Baltimore Museum of Art  
Boston, MA, Museum of Fine Arts  
Buffalo, NY, Albright-Knox Art Gallery  
Canberra, Australian National Gallery  
Castellaras-le-vieux (Alpes-Maritimes), collection David Douglas Duncan  
Corpus Christi, TX, South Texas Institute for the Arts Corpus Christi  
Dunkirk, Lieu d'Art et Action Contemporaine (LAAC)  
Kansas City, TX, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art  
London, Tate Gallery  
London, Victoria and Albert Museum  
Los Angeles, CA, Los Angeles County Museum of Art  
Milwaukee WI, Milwaukee Art Museum  
Montreal, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal  
Munich, Alte Pinakothek  
New Orleans, LA, New Orleans Museum of Art  
New York, NY, Museum of modern Art (MoMA)  
New York, NY, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum  
New York, NY, Whitney Museum of American Art  
Nice, Musée d'art moderne et d'art contemporain  
Norfolk, VA, Chrysler Museum of Art  
Osaka, National Museum of Art  
Palm Springs, CA, Palm Springs Desert Museum  
Paris, Musée national d'Art moderne - Centre Georges-Pompidou  
Paris, Fonds National d'Art Contemporain (F.N.A.C)  
Sacramento CA, Crocker Art Museum  
Saint-Paul-de-Vence, Fondation Maeght  
San Diego, CA, San Diego Museum of Art, don de Peggy Guggenheim  
San Francisco, CA, San Francisco Museum of Art, don du peintre Sam Francis  
Seattle, Seattle Art Museum  
Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie  
Tel Aviv, Tel Aviv Museum of Art  
Tokyo, The National Museum of Western Art  
Toronto, Art Gallery of Ontario  
Vienna, Albertina Museum  
Washington D.C., Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution  
Washington D.C., Smithsonian American Art Museum  
Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art

## SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

Studio Paul Facchetti, Paris, 1954  
Zimmergalerie Franck, Frankfurt, 1954  
Zoe Dusanne Gallery, Seattle, 1954  
Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1964, 1966, 1968, 1970, 1971, 1973  
Galerie Stadler, Paris, 1957  
Arthur Tooth & Sons, London, 1958, 1960, 1963  
Esther Robles Gallery, Los Angeles, 1960, 1962  
Gallery of Realities, Taos (New Mexico, United States), 1960  
Galerie Karl Flinker, Paris, 1961, 1962, 1965, 1973, 1976, 1980  
*Abstract Expressionists and Imagists*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1961  
Galerie Lienhard, Zurich, 1962  
Galleria Toninelli, Milan, 1962  
Galleria Odyssia, Rome, 1962  
Kunstverein, Cologne, 1962  
Eva de Buren Gallery, Stockholm, 1963  
Tokyo Gallery, Tokyo, 1964  
Court Gallery, Copenhagen, 1964  
Kumar Gallery, New Delhi, 1964  
Kestner-Gesellschaft, Hanover (retrospective exhibition), 1964  
Gertrude Kase Gallery, Detroit, 1965, 1970  
Galerie Agnès Lefort, Montreal, 1966  
Hope Makler Gallery, Philadelphia, 1966  
Gallery of Modern Art, Scottsdale, 1966  
Galerie Daniel Gervis, Paris, 1968  
Gallery Moos Ltd, Toronto, 1968, 1985  
Galerie Räber, Lucerne, 1968  
Richard Gray Gallery, Chicago, 1971  
Suzanne Saxe Gallery, San Francisco, 1971  
*Paul Jenkins Retrospective*, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 1971  
*Paul Jenkins Retrospective*, San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, 1972  
Images Gallery, Toledo, 1972  
*Abstract Expressionism*, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, 1972  
Gimpel Fils Gallery, London, 1972, 1974, 1980, 1982, 1986  
Abrams Original Editions, New York, 1972  
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, 1972  
Oklahoma Art Center, Oklahoma City, 1973  
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Santa Barbara, 1973  
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, 1973  
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Charleroi (Belgium), 1974  
Baukunst, Cologne, 1974, 1979  
Hunter Museum of Art, Chattanooga (Tennessee), 1974  
Lauren Rogers Library and Museum of Art, Laurel (Mississippi), 1975  
Tampa Bay Art Center, Tampa (Florida), 1974  
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, Montgomery (Alabama), 1974  
Galerie Cour Saint-Pierre, Geneva, 1977  
Philbrook Art Center, Tulsa (Oklahoma), 1977

Galleria d'Arte Narciso, Turin, 1978  
 Elaine Horwitch Gallery, Scottsdale (Arizona), 1979, 1980, 1986  
 Retrospective, Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, 1981  
*Hommage à Jean-Louis Barrault*, French Cultural Services of the French Embassy, New York, 1981  
 Maison Internationale du Théâtre, Théâtre du Rond-Point, Paris, 1981  
 Mead Art Museum, Amherst (Massachusetts), 1983  
 Alex Rosenberg Gallery, New York, 1983  
 Lieu d'Art et Action Contemporaine (LAAC), Dunkirk, 1984  
 Galleri Art Atrium, Stockholm, 1985  
 Gallery Art Point, Tokyo, 1986  
*Paul Jenkins, œuvres majeures*, Musée Picasso, Antibes, 1987  
 Galerie Régis Dorval, Lille, 1987  
 Galerie Patrice Trigano, Paris, 1988  
 Gana Gallery, Seoul, 1988  
*Paul Jenkins, œuvres majeures*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille, 2005  
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